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GREAT ISSUES COURSE
Dartmouth College

OBJECTIVES AND CHOICES IN AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICIES

Lecture Delivered by
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Gentlemen: I understand that this lecture inaugurat a section of the Great Issues Course which is devoted to Peace for the Free Society. That word 'Peace' is one that is on everybody's lips. Moscow says that peace is its policy. The U.N. is devoted to peace. We describe peace as the objective of our policy. Very few statesmen ever give a public speech without reaffirming their devotion to peace, as though failure to do so would make people think that they wanted exactly the opposite.

Any person who tries to be all things to all people we view as suspect. Any word that has the same pretentions might also be viewed with a certain suspicion. But aside from that, when we allot so high a place to any expression in our own official pronouncements, we ought to have a pretty clear and firm idea of what we are talking about. For these reasons, I suggest we take this word 'Peace', which we use so often and so easily, and have a little closer look at it.

What do we mean by the word 'Peace' when we say "it is the objective of foreign policy"? The normal answer to that question would be that we mean a state of affairs which is marked by an absence of wars, by an absence of violence. All right. Let's assume that it's international wars we are talking about. There aren't any real international wars in progress today. Does that mean that we then already <u>have</u> peace? And, if so, <u>how</u> is it that we can say that it is our objective to obtain something we already have? The answer to that is obviously that what we have today can't properly be described as peace, it is all too rickety and too unsound, there is no assurance it is going to last. There is too much antagonism around. What we mean by peace is not this sort of situation - where we have two great power systems glaring at each other over a border which is more like a military battle-line than it is like a peaceful international boundry. This, we say, is not peace - it is an armed truce between enemies. What we want is not just an absence of violence at the moment. We want a firm peace - one that will last - what we call a "<u>durable peace</u>".

All right, let's chalk that up. It's not just a peace but a durable peace we are talking about. But is this all? Would any sort of durable peace suit us? After all, there was a durable peace for centuries under the Roman Empire. I am sure the Russians feel that what they want to impose upon their own satellite countries is a durable peace. After all, there is a fairly durable peace in any sort of a prison. Obviously, that is not the sort of peace we want. That is a peace imposed on a people by force, what the ancients used to

call the Carthaginian peace.

We have to recognize that absence of violence alone does not mean that everyone is happy and that things are all the way that they ought to be. There can be various reasons why there is no violence. It can be because people are so contented and so adjusted to one another that they don't want to resort to violence. But it can also be because they are so terrorized by superior force that they don't dare to resort to violence. So we say we don't want that sort of a peace either. We want a peace founded on the principle of "live and let live", on mutual tolerance and respect. We want what we call a "just peace".

Now, perhaps, we are getting somewhere with this. It seems that it isn't only 'peace' in the abstract that we want, but a certain kind of peace - a just and durable peace. It seems, in fact, that peace is not an abstraction at all - it depends entirely on circumstances. It isn't so much a question of whether peace. It is a question of what peace, of whose peace, on what conditions peace. Tell us the answer to those things and, perhaps, we can tell you whether we like that kind of peace or not.

Now, all that is useful to know. I think it gets you somewhere. We began with a total cliche; we have reduced it to something less than that. But let's see whether all the cliche is out of it yet. Remember: we started with the assumption that it was international wars we were talking about. But is that assumption sound? If it is war that we're going to banish, how far do we carry that? Do we content ourselves with banishing wars between nations or do we go farther and insist that there should be no civil wars, no armed strife within nations? Here we are obviously getting into deep water. Civil war is a very wide concept. There can be all sorts of civil wars. They can include anything, from a few barefoot boys up in the hills with some old muskets to the sort of tremendous, highly organized civil conflict which we had in this country between 1861 and 1865.

I suppose, as a matter of fact, there never was a time in the history of civilization when there weren't a few civil wars in progress. There are several in progress at this moment, of one degree of intensity or another. They are in progress in Korea, in China, and in Indo-China, and in Burma and Malaya, and one is just petering out in Greece.

Are we going to make it the objective of our foreign policy to ban such wars everywhere? That is a very big order. Our forefathers wouldn't have liked it if someone had come along in 1861 and said: "Look here, you fellows can't have this war. We forbid you to have it. It would be a violation to the peace of the world." I think our forefathers would have said in the first place, "We feel strongly about this business. The things we're fighting for are things that matter to us. We are not going to stop just because somebody tells us to. You have got to be big enough to stop us." And, assuming that there had been somebody big enough to come in and make them stop (which actually there wasn't at that time), I think they then would have said: "If you are going to inhibit us from fighting this war out to a finish, then you have got to settle the issues that we were going to fight about. You have got to settle these troublesome issues of slavery and secession because they are ones we can no longer tolerate in our national

society."

Now similarly, anyone who sets out today to make it his business to [illegible] that there are no civil wars would have the same problem on his hands. He would have to be strong enough, first of all, to get away with it. And then he would have to be prepared to accept responsibility for solving all those complicated and troubling issues over which people like to fight civil war.

Plainly, we in this country couldn't try to do this ourselves. It would mean imperialism on a scale greater than anything the world has ever seen yet. It would mean world domination. It would mean setting ourselves up as the bosses and arbiters of everybody's business everywhere. And the international community couldn't really do it either. It isn't strong enough. It isn't united enough. It isn't organized enough. And, in my opinion, it won't be any of these things within our lifetime.

But, aside from that, if you look at what nations actually do about other people's civil wars, as distinct from what we might think they ought to do, you will see that from the standpoint of the international community, there seem to be civil wars and civil wars. That is: there seem to be some that matter a great deal to everyone, and do have a bearing on world stability, and there seem to be others which do not. There are civil wars, for example, in remote or unimportant parts of the world, or wars about issues which don't seem to other people to be important; and in such wars nobody seems to find it worthwhile to intervene. It seems to be generally assumed that it is better that such wars should run their course than that things should be complicated by other people trying to stop them.

On the other hand, there have been civil wars, like the one which took place in Russia in 1919 and 1920, or like the recent Spanish Civil War, in which many people thought it necessary to intervene. Clearly these wars were regarded as important to the peace of the world. To be sure, when people did intervene in these wars it was usually not because they wanted to stop the war, but only because they wanted to make sure their favorite side won out. But this diversity of practice - the fact that the great powers did intervene in some civil wars and left the others strictly alone - is indicative of the fact that you can't generalize about such wars. Some are so important that they represent a violation of the peace of the world or a threat to the peace of the world. Others are relatively meaningless or insignificant squabbles, which it would be unprofitable or unnecessary to try to prevent, just as it is usually both thankless and unprofitable to interfere in a family quarrel.

Again we come to the conclusion that civil war, like peace itself, is not an abstraction. It depends on circumstances. It is a question of whose war, and where, and for what. And we, therefore, cannot say that just because peace is our objective, all such wars are necessarily intolerable. There will continue to be some which we, and most other outside powers, will probably find it quite desirable to tolerate.

That brings up the question whether the same thing might hold in the case of international wars. Is it really true, as we have been

accustomed to say in recent years, that war itself is an intolerable state of affairs in the modern world; and that it must be the business of the international community to outlaw war itself, in all its manifestations and on every scale, great or small?

Here we have asked ourselves a very difficult question. It certainly is true that, as the great powers come increasingly to dominate international life, their interests spread farther and farther from their own power centers. And, with their interests, spread their jealousies and suspicions, their ambitions; and they begin to overshadow a greater and greater part of the world, until it becomes hard to find political happenings anywhere which don't seem to be colored by this shadow and to take on some significance from the standpoint of the great power rivalries and differences. This being the case, little wars can and sometimes do develop into big ones; and the uneasiness with which a lot of people in our society have come to view international violence as such is certainly justified.

Yet I am not sure that we can say, if we are to be entirely realistic, that <u>every</u> war is necessarily intolerable to the stability of the world, that <u>every</u> war warrants the intervention of the international community. I am not sure we can say there can be <u>no</u> war which does not represent a major disturbance to peace. It is not inevitable that in every international conflict Russia should be found on one side of the fence and we should be found on the other; there can be instances in which neither side has really any vital interest, or in which the interests of both sides are so contradictory that neither side wishes to intervene unilaterally. Sometimes the waters of foreign affairs get so muddy and so turbulent that it is in no one's interest to get into them any more deeply than he needs to. We had such an instance only recently in the war between the Israeli and the Arabs. Both of the major partners of the East-West conflict, that is, the Russians and ourselves, watched that war with the most intense scrutiny. We, ourselves, came very close to intervention in it through some of the attitudes we struck at Lake Success. But, actually, the war did run its course and the issue was decided, for the moment at least, without its becoming a major international complication and without any of the great powers intervening in a military way.

So I think it is a legitimate question whether we can, in our own minds, rule out every instance of international violence and say that we do not have 'peace' as long as such instances occur.

Now mind you, I'm not speaking here of our legal obligation. I understand very well that we, and all the other members of the United Nations, have agreed to renounce the use of force. I am aware that any resort to war or to violence would be a violation of these undertakings. I am speaking here of peace - not as an individual legal obligation but as a practical objective of United States foreign policy. After all, <u>not all</u> the countries of the world are members of the United Nations. And <u>not all</u> members of the United Nations discharge their obligations with a scrupulous devotion to the letter of the Charter. And, above all, let us remember that none of the international arrangements devised thus far, including the Charter of the United Nations, really provides the answer as to how the rule of change can operate in international life in such a way as to permit

all change to come by peaceful means and to make it unnecessary to resort to violence.

I call this to your attention because I think it is the main weakness of all these schemes for the achievement of permanent international security through the universal acceptance of some tight juridical concept outlawing war and calling for collective action against the aggressor. The fact of the matter is that human history is a fabric in which the fortunes and the strength and the prosperity of individual peoples are woven in and out in a pattern of great complexity. The relative strength of peoples - and I use the word 'strength' here not just as military strength, but in the sense of economic power and civic vigor and belief in themselves, and determination to influence the course of the affairs of the world - this relative strength of individual peoples is never static. It is always on the ascendent or it is going down. No nation has ever remained strong forever. International life is a sort of race in which the position of the runners is constantly changing. And this ever changing relationship in the real capacities and importance of peoples must find its registration at every juncture in world history in the practical international arrangements prevalent at the time - that is, in such things as borders and prestige, and political influence, treaties and privileges.

An international security system, if it were to give a total assurance of peace, could, therefore, not be a static one. It would have to be sufficiently flexible to move in step with this extremely subtle process of change and defer constantly to it.

We have as yet no adequate institutional or juridical solution to this problem. No one submits very easily or voluntarily to the harsh dictates of this law of change, especially when those dictates are going against him. Rarely do people agree that their particular borders ought to be retracted, or their international influence diminished, by the dictum of an international organization. And we know from our experience that bodies like the League of Nations or the United Nations, however much good they do, do not, in fact, anticipate very often the real changes which are in the cards, particularly when those changes involve things which are delicate or difficult for the great power members. They do not, in fact, look ahead and say to country X, "You are becoming steadily weaker in relation to your neighbors. You may not know it but you are. Whether you like it or not, you must reconcile yourself to a more modest place in the affairs of your area - perhaps even to the point of yielding political control over this or that territory to your neighbor Y." Those things just don't happen. And because they don't happen, life goes on in its own inscrutable and imperious way and the adjustments are not made when they ought to be made. Finally, the elementary forces of human nature break through and someone insists on something which is intolerable to someone else, and there you have the classic and the inalterable pattern of the origin of war.

And what is the international community to do when you get to that point? Is it to stand on the letter of the charter of the United Nations and say: "To hell with realities, you simply can't make war. It is better that life stand still or the stream of time turn backward, than that the tranquillity of the international community should be disturbed by this outbreak of violence."?

Of course, in instances of this sort, the international community in the form of the United Nations is always going to try to pour oil on the troubled waters and plead with people to find some way of settling the difference other than by fighting. But is this necessarily always enough? Can it not be true that perhaps involved in this particular hypothetical conflict between country X and country Y there is a real issue, a burning issue, an issue for which people on either side would be willing to fight, willing to die - individually and nationally - rather than to see it solved in a manner contrary to their desires or not solved at all? Perhaps the issue is one of national independence versus tyranny. It has been on many occasions. Perhaps people say: "We would rather die on our feet than live on our knees." Who are we to be critical of such an attitude? There have been times in the history of our own country when our forefathers felt this way themselves. You may say, of course: "Ah, yes, but in these instances we were right and the other fellows were clearly wrong. We were the victims, they were the aggressors. If you had a clear system for identifying the aggressors all this could have been taken care of." Perhaps. I won't argue the point. But don't we have to concede that human nature is so contrary, so irrational, so curiously diverse in the symbols to which it attaches its convictions and its loyalties, that there might still be issues in which neither side would be right and neither side would be wrong? And yet, both willing to fight and to die for their beliefs? And that these issues might be posed, not by the will of any living man but by this same irresistible stream of change about which I have spoken? If so, it would seem to me that we can't be too sure that we can in all cases make it the inalterable and inflexible objective of our policy to rule out international violence.

Now, what I have said - I want to make this clear - does not relate to the possibility of another great World War, total war between the Russians and all their allies and ourselves with all our allies. That is a different thing - that, of course, must be avoided. It must be avoided, not only because the atomic weapons and the other weapons of mass destruction are rapidly making it a suicidal sort of undertaking, but because any such war is always a catastrophe for the democratic side of the world and cannot really be the means of achieving positive objectives for a country like our own. Sometimes we have to fight when the issue is national survival, but we shouldn't look to the fighting of such wars to gain us too much. But that is another question - we shall get to that presently.

What I want to do at this point is just to challenge the proposition that the concept of peace must necessarily rule out any and every instance of international violence. I would submit that such a proposition is a perfectionist one; it is not in accord with the realities of life; it is too sweeping and too dogmatic to survive the test of reality.

That being so, where does that leave us in the analysis of this word 'Peace'? We find that it is, in every sense, a relative word, its meaning has got to be filled in by relation with something else. It does not rule out <u>all</u> violence. It rules out only <u>some</u> violence. And even when it does rule out violence, it does not do just this alone. It also implies a certain alternative to violence, an alternative which must meet the description of those words 'just' and 'durable', which are such short and little words but which really imply a multitude of

other things. In order to decide, therefore, what 'Peace' is, we have to know a lot of other things. We have to know what wars are important and what wars are not important. We have to know what sort of a world order could be called, properly, a 'just' one. We have to know what sort of a world order has a best chance of being a 'durable' one. And then, if we are going to be practical in this, we have to have some idea of how we would start out to achieve that type of a world order.

What are the criteria by which you know those things? It would be very pleasant to be able to stand here and give you some sort of a simple and exact formula to answer that question, but there isn't any such formula. If there were, everything would be different. In that case you could turn the problem of foreign affairs over to the experts or the exact scientists, perhaps even to a calculating machine, to get the component answers that you wanted. The truth is, I know of no way of finding out these things and I don't think anyone else in Washington does, except by the use of that quality we call plain human wisdom or common sense, something you find only in individuals, not in books. It is something made up of such components as experience and instinct and knowledge of how individuals behave and why they behave that way. And, above all, knowledge of ourselves and of our own virtues and our own deficiencies and a certain humility of spirit which rises out of that knowledge.

And this quality of human wisdom - wherever you can find it and enlist it in the formulation of foreign policy - has then got to be applied, not just to a portion of the foreign policy problem which you might put aside and say: "That is the peace problem", but to the sum-total of it. For peace is not a separable component of our national objectives. You can't say that one of our objectives is to achieve peace and that then we have a lot of other objectives besides. You can't make this separation anymore than you can make a total separation in warfare between the offensive and the defensive. The best defense in war is often a vigorous and imaginative offense. The Maginot Line psychology rarely gets you anywhere. Similarly, in foreign policy, the best pursuit of peace lies not in the negative elimination of violence but in a positive and determined effort to exploit our power and our influence as a nation in such a way as to twist world realities into the shape we would wish them to assume.

This process would not be without risks. We would have to accept, probably, many lesser risks in order to avoid greater ones. We might well have to tolerate violence on a minor scale in order to avoid the world-wide type of violence which could easily set human civilization back another 500 years. In this, and not in the fantastic dream-world of good behavior and tranquillity which the pacifists have, lies the real prospect of peace. This means there is no escape for us anywhere but in facing the host of highly unpleasant and bothersome practical questions which none of us like to deal with but which seem to make up the everyday stuff of foreign affairs problems.

Now what are those problems? In the first place, of course, we have to continue to walk successfully the tight-rope we walk in our relations with the Soviet Union. What divides us philosophically from the Soviet leaders is no minor issue. It is something that is as deep as the whole conflict of good and evil in the world of Christian ethics. I am not saying that we are all good people and they are all bad people.

I am not saying that we live up to our beliefs here or that they live up to theirs entirely there. What I am saying is that what we believe in is diametrically opposite to what they believe in. The two things are like oil and water. If they are right, then many of us who are conducting foreign policy in this country are so wrong that we ought not to be alive and that is exactly why, if the Soviet leaders had us in their power, we would not be long alive.

Now, these two outlooks are not going to be easily and quickly reconciled. Nothing is going to bridge, in any short space of time, this fundamental difference between ourselves and the present Soviet leaders. Nobody is going to go to Moscow and persuade Uncle Joe that he has been wrong all his life and that he ought to have a change of heart at this late date. Nobody will be able to bribe him into any such change of heart - not even by the ten billion dollars per annum that we recently heard proposed here. This difference is really the most profound of all the differences which can divide the human race because it is a question of whether you believe man can be ruled by the things in him which are good or whether you believe he can be ruled better by the things in him which are bad and weak. And that issue will be with us for a good long time.

On the other hand, we want to avoid having a war with these fellows and there is a possibility we can avoid it. We cannot be absolutely sure because we cannot know very well at any given time exactly what is in their minds. They are fanatics. They play very close to the line and they play for high stakes. They have been playing a dangerous, desperate game all their lives, the way they like to play it. It is always a delicate proposition when you are doing business with those fellows. But we think there is a possibility that we can avoid a war because we doubt that they really want one. Mind you again, that does not mean that they won't get into one. They didn't want to get into the one they got into in 1941. But, nevertheless, the fact they probably do not want one is something that you can hang onto. And, hanging onto that, we hope that by a very careful policy, we may be able to avoid war until time has accomplished what Justice Holmes said time usually does, that is until it has "eroded another fighting faith" to the point where we have a world and a peace which is more secure.

And to do that, we must hew close to a certain very delicate line. If we make too much of a show of strength, if we arm too rapidly, if we arm too unwisely, if we do things like arming the Germans suddenly, we can convince the Russians that we are really out to attack them. They don't need much convincing on that score - they are suspicious anyway. If we do that, if they come to the conclusion that war is bound to come sooner or later because we want it, then it is possible that they might prefer to have it sooner because they think their strength is better today, relative to ours, than it will be in the future. That is an eventuality we must avoid.

On the other hand, we must not lean too far in the other direction. If we go in for foolish or fatuous gestures of appeasement, or attitudes which look like weakness to them, they may then be tempted to act rashly and assume positions which would be intolerable to us in the Western world. Then we ourselves would have to fight to remove those positions. That is all we can safely do in this instance - keep a close eye on these fellows without provoking them too far. Meanwhile, we must see

whether we can fix up our part of the world in a way that looks a little more hopeful here, in a way that will convince the Russians our world is not the decrepit and disintegrating branch of human society they think it is. We must prove to them that it is unlikely that Western liberalism is going to collapse at any early date. We have to condition them to the idea that it will be a long, long time before those things are going to happen which their doctrine says are going to happen. That is the way, after all, in which fighting faiths finally erode.

Now that involves, in turn, a number of other component operations of foreign policy which are tremendous operations in themselves. That means we have to continue working very hard to organize, here in our non-communist part of the world, a solid international structure. It is not just a question of alliances or pacts or agreements for mutual security. Here again, the real problems are deeper and uglier and more specific.

We have to find the solution to the problem of the sterling balances. We have to find the solution to our whole 'dollar gap' problem. We have to thrash out trade problems, to make it possible for the British and our other friends in Western Europe to live and to live with some hope for a better future. We have to find some pattern of relations, above all, between the Germans and their European neighbors, which would make it possible for German strength to be revived - not as a source of terror and discord and intimidation within the Western world, but as an integral part of the strength of the West. In the under-developed areas all over the world we have to find some sort of relationship between our wealth and our productive power here at home, and the needs of those peoples which will neither frighten them with the spectre of American imperialism, nor saddle our people with an indefinite obligation to go in for some sort of charity or else be accused of being Uncle Shylock. And, finally, in that great area of the world which today is the no-man's-land between Communism and Western civilization - namely, in the countries of the Far East and of Southeast Asia - we have a particularly hard task. We have to find the words and a pattern of conduct on our own part which will bring home some way or another to the peoples of that area the suicidal folly of turning their fortunes over to the Russian communists who wish them no good; the desirability, in their own interests, of making an effort to understand our country and to treat it with a little greater respect than they have in the past.

Now, these are only the highlights of this whole problem. Every one of the things I have mentioned could be broken down into literally dozens of component problems and most of these problems are going to have to find some solution, if our goals are to be achieved. Only through this labyrinth of human realities can we make our way to a state of affairs which would be more worthy of the name of peace than that which we have today. There is no short cut to peace.

How do we know what that state of affairs will be and what it would be like if we could finally achieve it? Well, that is the question of American objectives in foreign policy. I tried last year to point out to you how hard it is to define those objectives in any concrete way. I don't think you can really do it. The motives of a person in life, his objectives, are actually a question of what he himself

is. They are questions of his own estimate of himself, his estimate of the contribution which he thinks he should make and is capable of making to life around him. The same thing is true of a nation. Aristotle said that every national community "is established with a view to some good; for mankind always acts in order to obtain that which they think good".

If you want to know what it is that we are fighting to achieve in this world - what state of affairs would give the desired color and substance to this skeleton framework which we like to call 'Peace' - then I would advise you to look inward. You have to look at every man and woman that you see on the streets or in the workshops or on the farms of the country, you have to study their attitudes, their aspirations, what makes them tick. And you have to see whether you can sense (because these things can always only be sensed, they can't be deduced) what it is that we call today - in this year 1950 after the War - the national spirit, what it is - to use Aristotle's phrase - that our people think good. If you can figure that out, you will know better than I can tell you, what are the objectives of foreign policy. For an individual - no matter what his capacity for bluff or affectation - can be no more to his fellowmen than what he actually is inside. And, by the same token, no nation can be any greater in foreign affairs - no more noble, nor more imaginative, nor more idealistic to the international community - than it is to itself at home.

Thank you very much.

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